

Raleigh, NC - I'm pleased and honored to join you on this beautiful morning to honor our veterans – our family members and friends and the thousands of others whom we do not know, the many generations of brave men and women who lived and died in the service of our nation – and the families who supported them as well.

This year in particular we offer a resounding thanks and welcome home to those who have served in Iraq, as you join the family of veterans who have served in past conflicts. We know that deployments in Iraq, and Afghanistan too, have presented special challenges and have required patience, adaptability, and new tactical skills. We salute you and we thank you for all you have done.

I hardly need to remind you that we are holding this observance less than a week after a hotly contested national election. But it is important to reflect on this fact for two reasons:

First, of course, we realize that it is the service and sacrifice of veterans over America's 225-year history that makes it possible for us to exercise these rites of democracy. Freedom has never been free, including the freedom to chart out own political course.

Secondly, we welcome this Veteran's Day observance as a reminder and reinforcement of national unity. Election issues are passionately felt and fought, and divisions are often highlighted. But this occasion reminds us of an important truth: what unites us as Americans is far more important than any issues that may divide us. Veterans Day, a great patriotic occasion, reminds us of that. And in honoring our Veterans, and making certain that none go without adequate health care, decent housing, and access to good jobs and education, we find an issue that transcends all political bounds.

So thank you to all who have served and to those who have organized today's events so that we may honor your service. You remind us of what it has taken to bring our country this far, and of the kind of community we wish to be.